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# School District 'Report Cards'; Don't Forget Funding For Schools

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**SCHOOL DISTRICT 'REPORT CARDS'** – The state's first "report card" issued Wednesday on the standards of its public school districts, which officially takes effect in 2000, is beneficial – and harmful – to the goal of improving individual districts, says Tom Lasley, University of Dayton's incoming dean of the School of Education.

"It's positive in that it will force school districts to be more focused on the kind of program initiatives they start," says Lasley. "And it also will compel districts to address two of the largest grading standards facing them – attendance and drop-out rates. These issues have been plaguing schools for a long time, and we haven't done a lot to correct them."

Another advantage to standardized grading of districts: community consensus on a school district's purpose and objectives. "With specific state standards, everyone knows what criteria are being used. It could create greater community consensus around what issues should be valued in a school district."

One of Lasley's biggest criticisms of the plan is that it divides school districts into "effective" and "ineffective" categories. "I don't mind that the state is issuing report cards," Lasley says. "But if a school district has shown growth on, say, test scores the last three years, then it should pass in that particular category. I would give them a good mark for this improvement, but the state would not."

For media interviews, contact **Tom Lasley** at (937) 229-3557.

**DON'T FORGET FUNDING FOR SCHOOLS** - Dan Raisch, associate professor of educational administration at UD, says that standardized testing of school districts can be an effective tool in improving education. "It happened in Kentucky, and many school districts there clearly improved their performance."

But, he qualifies, school districts need more than a grading system to improve: "The bottom line is that unless the state puts a significant amount of money into districts where there are a large number of at-risk students, it will take a very long time for a school district to improve just using the (report-card plan)."

For media interviews, contact **Dan Raisch** at (937) 229-3344.